

Monograph Review  
**RESEARCHING SPEAKING  
TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT**

Author: Rastislav Metruk

Book: **Researching Speaking. Teaching and Assessment**

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Reviewer: Olena Moskalenko

The monograph “Researching Speaking. Teaching and Assessment” delivers an interesting perspective on teaching and assessment methods of English. This book is an excellent resource to students, educators, assessors, and scholars. In reviewing this book, the principal criteria included content, organization, and reference sources.

The author, Rastislav Metruk, is a proven educator and scholar specializing in education with an emphasis on teaching English. His educational accomplishments include earning a Ph.D. Degree in English Language. Dr. Metruk’s multifaceted background establishes him in a strategic position to gather and assemble various issues of teaching and testing speaking skills.

The goal of teaching speaking skills is communicative efficiency. Learners should be able to make themselves understood, using their current proficiency to the fullest. They should try to avoid confusion in the message due to faulty pronunciation, grammar, or vocabulary, and to observe the social and cultural rules that apply in each communication situation.

One of the most common problems with speaking skills is that language learners who lack confidence in their ability to participate successfully in oral interaction often listen in silence while others do the talking. Moreover, language learners are often too embarrassed or shy to say anything when they do not understand another speaker or when they realize that a conversation partner has not understood them.

This monograph attempted to throw some light on the issues of instruction and evaluation of spoken proficiency. It examines speaking skills from two standpoints: teaching and testing. Apart from addressing various issues of teaching the skill of speaking, its primary objective is to develop new holistic and analytic scoring scales for the purposes of evaluation of English spoken proficiency of EFL (English as a foreign language) learners at the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) B2 and C1 levels.

The organization of “Researching Speaking. Teaching and Assessment” allows the reader to easily follow the content. The monograph is divided into five parts, namely: Part 1 “Introduction”, Part 2 “Teaching speaking skills”, Part 3 “Assessing speaking skills”, Part 4 “Developing new holistic and analytic scales” and Part 5 “Conclusion”.

Opening with introduction, the monograph progresses through the communicative function of language, which is emphasized by the foreign language curriculum. The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) represents an approach to foreign language teaching which accentuates that the objective of language learning is the Communicative Competence, and which focuses on meaningful communication and language use within classroom activities (Benati, 2009; Berns, 1990; Brumfit, 2001; Gondová, 2012; Pčolinská, 2009b; Yule 2010; Coelho, 2004; Richards & Schmidt, 2010; Romanowski, 2017, Hundarenko, 2015; McKenzie-Brown, 2012; Bačová & Leláková, 2016, etc.). The author makes a conclusion that modern teachers of English as a foreign language should pay their attention to all systems and skills, present language items in contexts, give their learners ample

opportunity for “playing” with the target language in pairs and small groups, make them active, delegate the responsibility for learning to the students, regard errors as an integral part of the learning process, and provide the learners with plenty of positive feedback.

Part 2 “Teaching speaking skills” is a research which is based on original sources published in English. Here, Dr. Metruk takes a more general approach by looking at the content of teaching speaking – speaking subskills (microskills) (p. 20); speaking and the CEFR; fluency, accuracy, appropriacy; conducting speaking activities, in which the author emphasizes the importance of pair work and group work; speaking activities; feedback; practical tips for conducting speaking activities; speaking and pronunciation. In author’s opinion these criteria when put together, form an overall competence of the spoken language.

The two parts that follow (Part 3 “Assessing speaking skills” and Part 4 “Developing new holistic and analytic scales”) are more focused and informative, and offer well-researched insights into assessment of speaking skills.

In the part on Assessing speaking skills (Part 3) Dr. Metruk’s scholarship is focused on the topics he is most comfortable with. It is divided into 7 sections that examine the main principles of assessment practice. Here the author offers an analysis of formative and summative types of assessment, potential pitfalls of assessing speaking skills, arranging speaking tests, ways of assessing the skill of speaking, holistic and analytic scoring with examples.

Part 4 of the monograph “Developing new holistic and analytic scales” presents author’s new scoring scales – both holistic and analytic, which can be used for the evaluation of spoken proficiency of EFL learners at the CEFR B2 and C1 levels. The author supplies an in-depth analysis of various aspects of the assessment of spoken proficiency, and selects the following categories: fluency and discourse; interaction; pronunciation; grammar range and accuracy; vocabulary (p. 77).

Thus, in final part the author comes to a conclusion that teaching and assessment of speaking skills should not be regarded as two separate notions as they are inextricably connected and mutually dependent. Therefore, teachers must not forget that teaching and assessment of speaking skills does not merely concern the systems of grammar and vocabulary (range and accuracy), which has often been the case. Other subskills such as fluency, pronunciation, discourse, using appropriate register, interaction strategies, speaking strategies, and many others are also of considerable importance.

The construction of the monograph meshes well with its organization and lends itself successfully to the study of different assessment methods of speaking skills. Each part is broken down into sections, which typically fit logically into the topic of the part. All parts are composed of several defining sections that maintain a sense of continuity throughout the volume.

The orderliness of the monograph conforms to an academic curriculum. The material is successfully visualized by the tables (they are 18). While it is impossible to thoroughly explore all topics concerning assessment of speaking skills, the detailed bibliography provides sources for obtaining more information. This format spotlights the key points of speaking skills development and assessment format. The monograph is well-referenced, making skillful use of first-person sources.

The author’s enthusiasm for the topic is obvious throughout the monograph. Overall, a detailed analysis of the advancement in teaching and assessment of speaking skills is provided in readable way and academic style.

An excerpt of the monograph can be found clicking the following link  
[https://www.academia.edu/37735840/Developing\\_New\\_Holistic\\_and\\_Analytic\\_Scales\\_for\\_the\\_Purposes\\_of\\_Assessing\\_Speaking\\_Skills\\_](https://www.academia.edu/37735840/Developing_New_Holistic_and_Analytic_Scales_for_the_Purposes_of_Assessing_Speaking_Skills_)